

Board for State Academic Awards

Charter Oak State College
Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium

Education Committee Public Hearing Monday, March 10, 2008

Testimony

by

**Ed Klonoski, Executive Director BSAA and
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Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee. My name is Ed Klonoski, Executive Director of the Board for State Academic Awards which oversees both Charter Oak State College and the CT Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC). I am here today to speak to **H.B. 5821, An Act Concerning Distance Learning** and to report on the progress of the CT Virtual High School.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to the General Assembly for its allocation of \$850,000 from surplus funds for FY 2008. Those funds were directed into the State Department of Education's budget for the establishment of the CT Virtual Learning Center. The CT Virtual Learning Center is built upon a Results Based Accountability goal that *"every public high school student in Connecticut will graduate on time with credits in the subjects and advanced placement courses appropriate to their academic plans."*

I would like to report briefly on its accomplishments so far.

We currently have over 300 students enrolled in online courses: 175 are taking Credit Recovery (Algebra, Geometry, Health, Earth Science, Civics, English 1 and English 2); 19 students are enrolled in Mandarin Chinese; and 27 students are enrolled in STEM related electives. We have a strong commitment to Advanced Placement courses; however, because of the scheduling of AP courses on a yearlong calendar, culminating in the exam which is offered in May, we could not offer AP courses beginning in January. These courses are planned to begin in September 2008. We do offer online Advanced Placement Exam Preparation courses in fourteen different subjects, and so far 91 students are enrolled in these courses.

Forty-seven districts including urban districts such as Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport; suburban districts such as West Hartford and Hamden, and small districts such as Ansonia, Bolton, and Wolcott have signed up to participate. A complete list of these districts is attached to my testimony. Several other districts are interested in participating, but many of them need School Board Policies before they are able to move forward. We encourage you to enact legislation that will provide the justification for amending Board of Education policies to qualify credits from the courses taught by the Virtual Learning Center to count toward graduation requirements.

We have recruited, screened, trained and hired six teachers and have six additional teachers on contract for backup. Eleven of these teachers are Connecticut certified in the subject they were hired to teach, one is Nationally Board Certified in her subject. There are dozens more in our queue for the next stage of screening, training and hiring.

We have leveraged the state's money carefully and bought perpetual licenses for nine courses. These courses can be used, reused, and adapted for up to 150 students per semester without incurring additional costs.

We have built a web portal for the Virtual Learning Center which provides single sign on access that includes resources for students, their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and other administrators. These resources allow students to engage in pre-enrollment orientation activities, find and register for their courses, and then access them directly. Parents can monitor their child's activities and progress. Teachers can apply online to teach and receive training. They can also access their courses, submit and store student progress reports and grades, and use the messaging system to communicate directly with the VLC staff, school administrators and parents.

Lastly, we have created and work closely with oversight committees including Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Principals, Guidance Counselors, and representatives from the State Department of Education, Commission on Educational Technology, Office for Workforce Competitiveness, and both teachers' unions, the CEA and AFT.

We are actively engaged in planning for year two. This includes purchasing additional perpetual licenses of SDE approved courseware for:

- College Board approved Advance Placement courses including AP Statistics, AP American History and AP Psychology. These courses will be available to students who cannot access them at their own schools.
- Credit recovery courses which will be offered "off cycle," so students can begin either the first or the second semester course material in the fall or the spring as long as they plan to finish within a timeframe that is agreed upon by their school administrators. For example, students who are failing a course in October could enroll in one of these courses and plan to complete it successfully before June.
- World language courses such as Mandarin 1 and 2 and Japanese, which are not available in most CT Schools.
- Additional subjects such as Micro and Macro Economics, English Literature, Spanish Literature.

The addition of these courses also requires continued teacher recruitment, screening, training, and professional development as well as the implementation of a teacher mentoring program as part of a continuous improvement program. Our plans also include continued improvement to the portal and work with all of CT's school districts to ensure that any student who can benefit from enrollment in these courses has access to them.

Funding Concerns

We began this process with the understanding that the program would receive two years of funding. Without FY 2009 funds, the number and types of courses available will be limited and we will need to impose tuition costs that may make access prohibitive for some districts and some students. School districts have indicated to us that their budgets for the next fiscal year are completed or in the final part of their process and do not include monies for VLC courses.

As part of the initial funding, we agreed to serve 1,000 students. With no additional funding, we will reserve funds allocated for course license purchases and teacher professional development to ensure that the remaining 700 students can be served.

If we receive the full \$850,000 that was proposed for the second year of this pilot, we will purchase and be able to offer 22 courses, including seven AP courses and fourteen AP prep courses, as well as serve an additional 2,000 enrollments with no tuition costs. A full list of those 22 courses is attached to my written testimony.

If we receive approximately half of that funding, we will be able to offer nineteen courses including six AP courses as well as the AP exam prep courses and serve a maximum of 1,200 students with no tuition costs.

If we receive no appropriation for year two, we would be able to offer the existing 16 courses including three AP courses plus the AP exam preparation courses, and we would need to charge tuition of \$400 per course.

Thank you for considering our request. We are happy to answer any questions you might have.

Attachment A: Participating School Districts as of March 7, 2008

Bethel Public Schools
Bloomfield Public Schools
Bolton Public Schools
Branford Public Schools
Bridgeport Public Schools
Brookfield Public Schools
Canton Public Schools
Capitol Region Education Council
Cheshire Public Schools
CT Technical Schools
Darien Public Schools
East Hampton Public Schools
East Hartford Public Schools
Farmington Public Schools
Greenwich Public Schools
Guilford Public Schools
Hamden Public Schools
Hartford Public Schools
Killingly Public Schools
New Britain Public Schools
New Fairfield Public Schools
New Haven Public Schools
Newtown Public Schools

Norwich Public Schools
Oxford Public Schools
Plainfield Public Schools
Plymouth Public Schools
Regional District 19
Regional District 5
Regional District 7
Regional District 8
Ridgefield Public Schools
Rocky Hill Public Schools
Stamford Public Schools
Stonington Public Schools
Stratford Public Schools
Tolland Public Schools
Waterbury Public Schools
Waterford Public Schools
Watertown Public Schools
West Hartford Public Schools
West Haven Public Schools
Westbrook Public Schools
Wilton Public Schools
Winsted Public Schools
Wolcott Public Schools

Attachment B: Courses

- Current and pending licenses for courses include:

Algebra 1

Algebra 2

Geometry

American History

American Government Civics

Life Management Skills

English 1

English 2

English 3

English 4

Earth Space Science

Mandarin Chinese 1

Mandarin Chinese 2

AP Statistics

AP American History

AP Psychology

14 AP exam prep courses

- Current and proposed course licenses if partially funded:

Algebra 1

Algebra 2

Geometry

American History

American Government Civics

Life Management Skills

English 1

English 2

English 3

English 4

Earth Space Science

Mandarin Chinese 1

Mandarin Chinese 2

AP Statistics

AP American History

AP Psychology

AP Microeconomics

AP Macroeconomics

AP English Literature

- Current and proposed course licenses if fully funded:

Algebra 1

Algebra 2

Geometry

American History

American Government Civics

Life Management Skills

English 1
English 2
English 3
English 4
Earth Space Science
Forensic Science
Mandarin Chinese 1
Mandarin Chinese 2
Japanese
AP Statistics
AP American History
AP Psychology
AP Microeconomics
AP Macroeconomics
AP English Literature
AP Spanish Language